

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 6484

EXDIS HANDLE AS NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP, PGOV, US, KS
SUBJ: AMBASSADOR'S INITIAL CALL ON PRESIDENT PARK

1. AFTER PRESENTING MY CREDENTIALS THIS MORNING (JULY 24),
I HAD A RATHER BRIEF BUT CORDIAL STANDUP CHAT WITH PRESIDENT
PARK. I FELT INHIBITED FROM DISCUSSING ANYTHING VERY
CONTROVERSIAL BY THE PRESENCE OF SOME OTHER KOREAN OFFICIALS,
PARTICULARLY THE FONMIN, THE CEREMONIAL NATURE OF THE
OCCASION, AND THE ABSENCE OF CHAIRS.

2. AFTER THE PRESIDENT WELCOMED ME WITH WARM COMMENTS ABOUT
THE UNITED STATES AND ITS IMPORTANCE TO KOREA, WE TOUCHED
BRIEFLY ON THE CAUSES OF STRAIN OVER THE PAST YEAR. I SAID
THAT I LEFT WASHINGTON WITH THE FEELING THAT THE WORST
WAS OVER AND THAT OUR RELATIONSHIP WAS DEFINITELY ON THE
MEND. ON THE TROOP WITHDRAWAL ISSUE, FOR EXAMPLE, PRESIDENT
CARTER WAS PROCEEDING WITH THE KIND OF CAUTION WHICH SHOULD
BE REASSURING TO PRESIDENT PARK, AND THE PROGNOSIS FOR
AFFIRMATIVE CONGRESSIONAL ACTION ON THE TRANSFER LEGISLA-
TION THIS YEAR WAS GOOD. SOME PRICKLY PROBLEMS REMAINED,
HOWEVER, ESPECIALLY QTE KOREAGATE UNQTE WHERE INHERENTLY
DIFFICULT PROBLEMS HAD BEEN COMPOUNDED BY PUBLICITY.
WITHOUT REFERRING TO THE DETAILS OF THE O'NEILL/RHODES
REQUEST, I EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF KOREA'S MAINTAINING
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THE MOST POSITIVE POSSIBLE APPROACH TO THE NEEDS OF OUR
CONGRESS BECAUSE A SATISFACTORY OUTCOME WAS IMPORTANT TO THE
FUTURE TONE OF US/ROK RELATIONS. MENTIONING ANOTHER AREA
OF CONTROVERSY, I SPOKE APPROVINGLY OF THE PRESIDENT'S
EFFORTS DURING THE PAST YEAR TO ACCOMMODATE OUR CONCERNS
OVER THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION. I SAID PRESIDENT CARTER,
THE SECRETARY, AND OTHER SENIOR OFFICIALS WELCOMED THIS

TREND AND HOPED IT WOULD CONTINUE -- AS PRESIDENT PARK HIMSELF SEEMED TO IMPLY IN HIS MOST RECENT LETTER TO PRESIDENT CARTER. PARK LISTENED CAREFULLY BUT INSTEAD OF RESPONDING TO THESE COMMENTS SIMPLY SAID THAT HE EXPECTED TO HAVE A PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH ME SHORTLY AFTER RETURNING FROM HIS VACATION.

3. COMMENT: ON THE LIMITED SCALE OF MY KNOWLEDGE, I WOULD SAY PRESIDENT PARK WAS QUITE RELAXED DURING OUR CONVERSATION AND PLEASED THAT THE US AMBASSADORIAL TRANSITION WAS COMPLETE. I DELIBERATELY REFRAINED FROM TANGLING WITH HIM OVER HIS REFUSAL TO RECEIVE CONGRESSMEN HAMILTON AND SPENCE, BECAUSE I WAS SURE I COULD NOT HAVE CHANGED HIS MIND. DURING THE CONVERSATION, INCIDENTALLY, I CONGRATULATED THE PRESIDENT ON HIS REELECTION AND BELIEVE THAT MY REMARKS SHOULD SATISFY THE KOREANS UNTIL THE INAUGURATION, AT WHICH TIME A PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE WOULD BE APPROPRIATE. GLEYSTEN

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